

Stop and Smell the Rosé at These 5 Napa Vineyards



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If you are looking for stunning countryside scenery, incredible food and legendary wine, you don't have to look much further than Napa Valley. Famous for its cabernet sauvignon, Napa has upward of 400 vineyards that dot the region.

However, it doesn't stop there. Napa is also home to award-winning restaurants and quaint bed and breakfasts that make it an ideal getaway.



With so much to choose from and the toll unplanned choices can take on your bank account, it can be pretty daunting to map out your first trip to Napa.

Luckily for you, after taking a few trips to Napa with my wine squad, we found five awesome vineyards that offer great experiences and wine without destroying your wallet. Tastings at these wineries range from \$15 - \$65, and most include a tour.

Note that wine club members typically have complimentary admission/access or cheaper rates for tastings, so if you know what you like, you might want to consider joining a winery.

1. Duckhorn Vineyards



Located in St. Helena, Duckhorn was one of the first 40 vineyards in Napa and produces an iconic merlot. This was the first place we visited and we were floored by how incredible our tasting was.

Just like its wine, the grounds are smooth, classy and comfortable. As soon as we walked in, the hosts were super friendly and greeted us with a glass of chardonnay and walked us over to our table. What followed was a series of tastings of Duckhorn's portfolio wines for that season.

I am not a wine expert, but I was certain that the quality of the wine was head-over-heels better than anything I had ever tasted. We also paired our wines with a charcuterie plate which was amazing (though we also may have been

starving from our drive). All in all, Duckhorn is a stylish place with phenomenal wine.

2. Alpha Omega Winery



Not too far from Duckhorn is the Alpha Omega winery. This is one place absolutely worth visiting because this place is crazy gorgeous. With tree-covered hills, miles of grapevines and a stunning fountain in front of a contemporary cottage, you are pretty much guaranteed to get that #extra Instagram picture.



The beauty of the wine here is that the winemakers get a lot of grapes from the valley floor, the hillsides and the coast, which leads to a great variety of wine, meaning there is guaranteed to be something for everyone.

3. Paraduxx



As a lover of puns, I could not pass up a vineyard that has a “pair of ducks” on the bottle cover. If the duck sounds familiar, that is because this is Duckhorn’s hipster cousin who’s all about, like, subverting the mainstream.

It was created by the makers of Duckhorn who wanted to experiment with other styles of grapes and the result totally makes sense. If you are looking for something fresh and unique, you have to swing by. Our tasting guide was hilarious and incredibly passionate about wine, which led to an unforgettable experience as she explained the stories behind the different blends of wines that Paraduxx serves.

As a newbie, I emerged from this experience having really learned a lot about what winemakers think about when crafting delicious wines.

4. Castello di Amorosa



If you are tired of the traditional vineyard aesthetic, have kids (or in my case, are a man-child), or just want to drink some wine in a castle, I would highly recommend the Castello di Amorosa. This place is a literal castle, and it is stunning. While strolling through the grounds, you can admire the architecture complete with a moat, a drawbridge, a chapel, a knights chamber and a great hall. I would be remiss if I didn't tell you about a pair of majestic peacocks that strut around. This place is unique, but is also home to some pretty solid wine.

It was here that I was introduced to gewurztraminer, which has become my favorite grape varietal of choice when I eat any sort of

Indian food (seriously, if you like spice, try it, it's a game changer).

5. Larson Family Winery



I saved the best for last, and Larson will always have a special place in my heart because it just felt like home (perhaps because it was the last place we visited after a full day of tasting).

Upon walking in, you are greeted with a glass of wine and three adorable Labradors who are the mascots of the winery. Once you get done (OK, you are never really done) petting them, you can stroll on over for a tasting and it is evident that these people love wine. If you want Napa wine without the ostentation, you have got to come to the place whose motto is “We drink what we can, and sell the rest.”

During our tasting, we learned a lot about the Larson family and their famous Three Lab Cab and sampled some seriously impressive wine. Once you are done with your tasting, you can check out their spacious patio that was once home to the largest rodeo in Northern California and play some cornhole while

enjoying an amazing afternoon with your family and friends.

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Have you been to Napa?
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Photos by Abhinava Singh.

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Abhi is a software engineer at NerdWallet who joined the company after graduating from UC Berkeley. If you can't find him on the softball diamond you are likely to find him playing board games with his friends or rocking out to the Killers in a karaoke bar. [Read more](#)

